

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: DEPARTMENTAL STUDY OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS SUPPLY
RESTRAINTS

REF: STATE 004313

1. GREECE IS NO MORE THAN AN OCCASIONAL SUPPLIER OF OBSOLETE EQUIPMENT TO OTHER COUNTRIES (E.G., ONLY ENFIELD RIFLES TO UGANDA IN RECENT YEARS), AND IT DOES HAVE A CAPABILITY TO PRODUCE AMMUNITION IN EXPORTABLE QUANTITIES, BUT THIS IS ONLY A HYPOTHETICAL POSSIBILITY. SINCE THE AMMUNITION CAPACITY IS ALMOST ALL OF U.S. ORIGIN, U.S. EXPORT CONTROLS APPLY. THE PRINCIPAL SUPPLIERS OF ARMS TO GREECE HAVE BEEN THE UNITED STATES, THE FRG, FRANCE, AND ITALY. ACQUISITIONS OF EQUIPMENT FROM NON-NATO COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN EXCEEDINGLY RARE AND USUALLY NON-LETHAL. THEREFORE, UNLIKE THE WESTERN EUROPEANS, GREECE PSYCHOLOGICALLY AND IN REALITY WOULD VIEW ARMS SUPPLY RESTRAINTS AS A RECIPIENT.

2. OVER THE MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS THAT GREECE HAS BEEN IN NATO (UNCERTAINTIES OF THE PAST 18 MONTHS ASIDE), IT HAS LEARNED TO RELY ON NATO ASSESSMENTS OF AN EVER-PRESENT EXTERNAL MILITARY THREAT, GROWING APACE IN CONVEN-

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TIONAL CAPABILITY AND SPEARHEADING AN AGGRESSIVE IDEOLO-

GICAL IMPERIALISM WHICH HAD BECOME ANATHEMA TO A GENERATION OF GREEKS DURING THE 1944-49 COMMUNIST INSURRECTION. CONSTANTLY URGED TO COUNTER THIS THREAT BY PURSUING AMBITIOUS NATO FORCE GOALS, THE TOTAL ATTAINMENT OF WHICH WAS ALWAYS BEYOND ITS GRASP BECAUSE OF THE PAUCITY OF DOMESTIC FINANCIAL RESOURCES, GREECE LEARNED TO MAKE DO PRIMARILY WITH HAND-ME-DOWNS FROM THE U.S. FORCES WHICH, HOWEVER WELCOME THIS EQUIPMENT WAS, LEFT ITS FORCES STRUGGLING TO STAY AHEAD OF A STEADILY ADVANCING TIDE OF OBSOLESCENCE. THE HISTORIC ENMITY BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY, DORMANT FOR FOUR DECADES, BEGAN TO CROWD THE WARSAW PACT OUT OF THE FOREFRONT OF THE COLLECTIVE GREEK CONSCIOUSNESS IN 1964. WHILE GREECE'S EFFORTS TO BETTER ITS MILITARY CAPABILITIES IN THE ENSUING DECADE CONTINUED TO BE JUSTIFIED IN FAMILIAR NATO TERMS, IT WAS INCREASINGLY SEEN AS A VITAL NECESSITY IN THE EVENT THE HISTORICAL ENMITY DEGENERATED INTO HOSTILITIES. DURING THIS DECADE THE COINCIDENCE OF A BURGEONING GREEK ECONOMY, AN AUTHORITARIAN GREEK GOVERNMENT AND A PUNITIVE-MINDED U.S. CONGRESS LED FIRST TO A SELECTIVE EMBARGO ON ARMS DELIVERIES AND, AFTER THAT WAS LIFTED, TO THE GOG DECISION TO FOREGO FURTHER GRANT ASSISTANCE AS A FACE-SAVING STEP TO PRE-EMPT A CONGRESSIONAL CUTOFF.

3. IN THE NATIONAL TRAUMA OF JULY/AUGUST 1974, GREECE NARROWLY AVERTED HOSTILITIES WITH TURKEY, BUT PERCEIVED SUCH HOSTILITIES AS AN EVER-PRESENT DANGER WHILE CYPRUS AND OTHER UNRESOLVED ISSUES CONTINUED TO PLAGUE THE TWO COUNTRIES. AN AMBITIOUS MILITARY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM, ON TOP OF SIGNIFICANT CREDIT PURCHASES MADE DURING THE LAST MONTHS OF AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT, MADE THE WILLINGNESS OF OTHER NATIONS TO ASSIST IN THIS PROGRAM EVEN MORE OF A TOUCHSTONE OF AN EFFECTIVE ALLIANCE RELATIONSHIP. THERE IS EVERY REASON TO THINK THAT THIS GREEK ATTITUDE WILL REMAIN UNCHANGED FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THUS UNTIL GREECE EITHER REACHES THE HEIGHTS OF MILITARY MODERNIZATION, WHICH LIE SEVERAL HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS AND A NUMBER OF YEARS AHEAD, OR RESOLVES ITS SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES WITH TURKEY, INCLUDING THE CYPRUS QUESTION, THE GOG WILL HAVE NO INTEREST IN ANY
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RESTRAINT ON ARMS TRANSFERS THAT WOULD HINDER ITS PURSUIT OF THE REQUISITE DEGREE OF SELF-SUFFICIENT MILITARY SECURITY.

4. DESPITE ITS PROBABLE LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR SUCH RESTRAINTS AS THEY MIGHT AFFECT GREECE, THE GOG DOUBTLESS WOULD WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS AS WELL AS IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ARMS TRANS-

FERS, NOT SO MUCH TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF RESTRAINTS AS TO ENSURE THAT ANY PROGRESS TOWARD THIS GOAL LEAVES GREECE NO WORSE OFF VIS-A-VIS ITS ANTAGONISTS THAN BEFORE THE CONFERENCE. IN OUR JUDGMENT, BROACHING THE SUBJECT BILATERALLY WOULD RISK ENGENDERING THE WORST KIND OF GREEK MISINTERPRETATION OF U.S. MOTIVES. HOWEVER, BECAUSE GREECE REGARDS ITSELF AS STILL WITHIN THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK OF NATO, AND SINCE ITS CURRENT MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT HAS KNOWN LITTLE ELSE BUT NATO, THE GOG WOULD PROBABLY PREFER DISCUSSIONS IN THAT FORUM IF THEY MUST TAKE PLACE. IT IS LIKELY THAT GREECE WOULD ARGUE THAT RESTRAINTS ON ARMS TRANSFERS AMONG NATO ALLIES WOULD NEGATE THE BASIC PURPOSE OF THE ALLIANCE. LIKE MANY OTHERS, GREECE COULD BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT RESTRAINTS ON ARMS TRANSFERS TO RECIPIENTS IT WOULD REGARD AS LESS WORTHY THAN ITSELF OR WHO ARE GEOGRAPHICALLY AT SOME REMOVE FROM GREECE.

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